

# THE JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL

BALTIMORE 5, MARYLAND

RUSSELL A. NELSON, M. D., DIRECTOR

September 28, 1961

Dr. Victor A. McKusick  
Johns Hopkins Hospital  
Baltimore 5, Maryland

Dear Victor:

Thank you for the students' comments concerning the Bar Harbor Course. Concentrating only on the amendments, I suggest the following.

## Facilities:

1. The lighting, screen projection facilities, light control, etc., can be improved.

2. Apparently padding is wanted at seat level.

3. I am not convinced that the room can house more than the previous number and suggest caution concerning Earl Green's additional students from the Jax. In no case would I move from the Oakes.

4. An adequate housing bureau should be operative. The students were apparently not unanimously pleased, particularly those with families. I do not suppose that those of us who made our own arrangements are ever entirely aware of the discomfort of certain of our fellows.

## Content:

These matters from the "Comments" impress me in particular, viz.,

1. Many of the students apparently did not appreciate, do not subscribe to the unitary view of biology underlying the first week's material. I continue to believe that the matters discussed are, in the main, essential but also believe that it is of the utmost importance to state clearly the reasons for this belief at the outset and to reiterate them, with relavance, in each lecture.

Possibly provision of the "faculty" with a distillation of the students' comments plus your recommendations will help tie the course together.

2. There is a definite need for outlining the practical approaches of human genetics. Therefor, beginning with a given character, how do we proceed in demonstrating or rejecting simple inheritance? And, paramountly, why do we bother?

There is a wistful desire to know this running through many of the students' comments. Realistically, these are tasks which, in practice, several of us face many times yearly. These tasks, the problems of simple probability, simple statistics, population genetics, and pedigree patterns are all of a piece and I believe can be best taught together. I do not believe that population genetics and statistical genetics are ever very meaningful to this sort of audience when taught in the abstract and in particular apart from work-a-day genetics.

Provisionally I would suggest that Barton be given Thursday morning of the first week and that the polymorphisms be discussed as they are in fact, viz., biochemistry plus the Hardy-Weinberg and all that this involves, which is most of simple statistics and probability. This is a full morning's task. (Friday?)

This day then provides a needed foundation for the blood groups. It knits biochemistry and mathematical genetics in a way that no other topic can.

3. I believe that the mouse is, in the frame of this course, an object of lesser importance and time assigned to the JAX for mouse genetics should give way as needed.

#### Additional Comments Concerning Content

1. The difficulties involved in studying the genetics of the more common diseases probably deserve further treatment than they have had. A topic of the second week.

2. Provisionally, I would retain the "papers" at the end of the course but end them, and the course, by the second Friday noon.

3. Let's have a morning for the hemoglobins: possibly Thursday, moving Bart to Friday, polymorphisms to Saturday and blood group to Monday.

#### Lecturers

1. The linkage lecture on Monday-I was badly done and the methods introduced lacked pertinence as well as clarity.

2. Unless multifactoral genetics can be clearly handled (see "Additional Comments" (1) above) then I suggest we forget the whole thing.

3. Elizabeth Russell wanders incomprehensively. Can we save her for panel discussions?

4. Since I fear that at times our messages didn't get home can't we use Curt Stern and Bentley Glass as the "cleanup men" after each lecture. At least let them know that we would welcome and wish their comments, their underscoring after each major session.

5. The panel on evolution seemed half hearted to me and wants more controversy.

General recommendations:

1. Bibliographies should be prepared for distribution by each lecturer. There is apparently a desire for wider reading and good bibliographies will cement our purposes especially with an audience that does not habitually read PNAS, etc.

2. A recommendation of pre-course reading (the same as suggested for our seminar course) would answer the need expressed by some students.

3. Evening sessions begin at 7:30 p.m.

4. If the cost of facilities items are going to cut into salaries then I suggest a modest token fee rather than diminishing staff salaries as a solution. The bulk of the students were subsidized, in whole or part, so a small token should work no hardship.

I have not discussed all modifications suggested by the students nor some which I believe Barton and Bill will emphasize; however, I truly believe that modification in the areas mentioned above (vide, Content: 1 and 2) deserve considerable attention.

So far the respondend.

Sincerely,

SHB:mp

CC: Dr. Childs  
Dr. Young

Samuel H. Boyer, M.D.  
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